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Thomas J. Graves

San Francisco partner in charge Thomas J. Graves is a man accustomed to being involved in many of the innovations and important decisions of both the Firm and the profession. One of the early tax specialists in Haskins & Sells, he went on to become the first person to coordinate the Firm's tax practice on a nationwide basis. It was Tom Graves who was named partner in charge in Washington, D.C. when that office was established. He served as a member of an advisory committee to the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, as well as chairman of the AICPA taxation committee that was the first to attempt to define the role of the CPA in tax matters. Now, as head of one of the Firm's largest offices, he has helped spur the growth of our practice in the nine years of his tenure there.

A native of Tell City, Indiana, Tom attended the University of Notre Dame at the same time as several other H&S partners, such as Tom Hogan, Phil Sandmaier, Larry Walsh and Lou MacKenzie. "I didn't know them at the time," Tom says, "since in those days dormitories were divided up by class, and you usually had fewer friends outside your immediate peer group." While his original goal was to become an attorney, he also took courses in business and found himself doing exceedingly well in accounting. He graduated summa cum laude, which helped prompt his decision to make a career of public accounting.

Offered a position by the Chicago office in 1938, Tom, like most young accountants, began with audit work, occasionally picking up a tax assignment. When he was drafted during World War II, he went to Officer Candidate School and was assigned to the Quartermaster Corps, largely as a result of his accounting background. Half of the 800 men in his OCS class applied for a job involving IBM "electric accounting machines," and Tom was one of the ten finally selected for the assignment.

Sent to the Philadelphia Quartermaster Depot as assistant to the officer in charge of the Machine Accounting Section, he was soon promoted to the number one position. "This gave me the opportunity when still quite young to be an administrator, with about 250 people reporting to me. It was, if not an exciting experience, a valuable one."

Returning to the Chicago office at the end of the war, Tom was soon made a principal (the term for manager then). John Queenan, then still several years away from being named managing partner of the Firm, proposed that Tom become a tax specialist and outlined a plan for building the necessary exposure and recognition on a nationwide basis. "I started out on the speaking circuit," Tom recalls, "without really knowing too much about my subject. I felt secure with the prepared material, but I hoped no one would ask a question that I would not be able to answer." With much study and hard work, as well as natural ability, he progressed quickly. In 1953 he became a partner in the Firm.

Haskins & Sells had recently rented an office in Washington, D.C. held down by a secretary and one manager. In 1955 Tom was asked to take charge of that office, observe the situation and make recommendations for its future. "Of course, my very presence constituted a 50-percent increase in personnel," Tom says with a smile. "After analyzing what was going on, I realized that we could transform this office by adding a practice office to the important service function. I organized the tax work, established contact with the Internal Revenue Service and sought out clients—borrowing staff from the Baltimore office as I needed it."

In 1957, with the Washington office functioning smoothly and Ed Robertson newly appointed partner in charge, Tom moved to Executive Office to coordinate the Firm's tax practice. He was again in a position for innovation, unencumbered by a predecessor or long-established policy. This gave him the chance to initiate programs that remain the mainstay of today's tax practice. Tom worked closely with EO partners Emmett Harrington, Everett Shifflett and Weldon Powell as he set out to ascertain who the potential specialists were, arrange for the dissemination of information and pinpoint the realities of the practice-office requirements.

Because the Firm's practice was growing and qualified people could not be spared by the practice offices, Tom did not bring many "trainees" into EO on a formal basis. He did recruit several men, however, including Milt Kupfer, whom he had known in the Chicago office and

who now heads the New York tax practice, and Hugh Garnett, now a professor at the University of West Florida in Pensacola, who was the guiding force behind the development of the international tax practice. Tom built an organization solid enough to carry on without him—the true test of administrative leadership.

When Mike Chetkovich was selected as managing partner of the Firm, Tom was asked to take over his duties as partner in charge of the San Francisco office. Another challenge—another affirmative response—and Tom was off to the "City by the Bay." During 1966 while the two men were both in San Francisco, Tom prepared himself for his new responsibilities. He also began to plan a new office, and started by signing a lease in the Wells Fargo building on Montgomery Street, just a few blocks from Union Square. After interviewing four architects, he selected Lloyd Flood, who seemed most in tune with his own feeling about office decor. "I wanted an image of a forward-looking firm, not something stuffy. I hoped to establish a look that would be 'conservatively contemporary,' a professional atmosphere that would be upbeat and convey that message to the people who worked in it."

As he walks through the dramatically lighted corridors, pointing out the Oceanic sculpture, lacquered Chinese cabinets and pieces by contemporary local artists, calling special attention to the conference room with its unique table and elegant Italian chairs, Tom is clearly at home in the eclectic environment of the office.

Acknowledging that there was a good foundation of substantial clients at the time he became head of the office, Tom adds, "Our growth has been more than satisfactory, bringing us from the fifth largest office in the Firm to the third. The potential was there; the whole country was booming in the late sixties, and this area was doing particularly well. We worked hard to take full advantage of the opportunities."

If this sounds simple on paper, it is certain that generating this sort of enthusiasm requires a special skill. The partner in charge must know how to motivate his people, how to excite them about the chances for advancement. Tom does this by showing an open interest, getting di-



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rectly involved with what is happening on all levels in the office, and creating an atmosphere that engenders growth.

"A person should have an inquiring mind and an imaginative personality, with a virtually constant desire for positive change," Tom says. "As a rule of thumb, I find that if something hasn't been changed in the last five years, you had better take a look at it and see if it should be. If you can find nothing that needs improving, you may well be at a standstill." Only one reflection of this position is the fact that H&S sub-offices in Hollister, Oakland, Salinas and San Jose were established during his tenure as PIC in San Francisco.

This attitude stems from all parts of Tom's career, including those aspects of it that have expanded at various times beyond the immediate perimeters of the Firm. As part of an advisory committee reporting to the Commissioner of Internal Revenue from 1960 to 1962, he met several times a year with representatives of the IRS. The group, made up of professors, lawyers, businessmen and other

tax practitioners, dealt with an agenda of administrative and enforcement problems, helping the Commissioner set policy on sensitive issues of the time, such as the question of the way executives handle their expense accounts.

From 1962 to 1965 Tom was chairman of the AICPA Committee on Federal Taxation, providing almost constant liaison with the Internal Revenue Service. As chairman, he served as the committee's spokesman before Congressional committees and the Treasury Department, giving advice on the administration of tax laws. The committee was also influential in formulating for the first time the role of the certified public accountant in tax practice. As a result of this work, the AICPA began producing a series of booklets guiding the accountant within the general limits of the ethical code.

Tom also served for a time on a committee set up by President Lyndon Johnson. While the report that came from this group was never published, it did meet several times with the president,

and Tom recalls one afternoon when Johnson, having spent a long and difficult day with the press, sat and talked with them about the press conference for more than half an hour.

On the value of such public service Tom has this to say: "Although the work can be time-consuming and may mean juggling several schedules at once, an individual who performs well in significant ways reflects positively on himself, the firm with which he is affiliated, and the profession as a whole."

A member of the Firm's policy committee since its inception under Mike Chetkovich, Tom has also been vice president of the California Society of CPAs. "I don't feel it is necessary for me to move from one committee to another within the state society," he points out. "I find that I now dedicate most of my energy to running this office." But he has taken the time to serve on the boards of the Boy Scouts and the Stock Exchange luncheon club.

Tom and his wife Beverly live in Atherton, a lovely suburb of San Francisco, located on the peninsula south of the city. It is a perfect spot for a man who likes to balance the physical and the cerebral, offering as it does access to the Sierras for skiing in the winter and perfect golf weather in the summer. Tom also jogs first thing every morning. Twenty-six times around the outside of his house gives him a two-and-one-half mile workout, without having to fend off neighborhood dogs. With retirement coming up in a few years, Tom is planning to stay in his community. "San Francisco has been such an invigorating place in which to live and do business that I do not see any reason to change."

Tom's career with Haskins & Sells has provided a multitude of outlets for a man with the energy and drive to do consistently more than is required, and his contributions to the IRS and the AICPA in helping to define the status of the accountant in relation to tax practice complement this. He has been lucky, and he admits that his path has often been less planned than a matter of "being in the right place at the right time." But Tom has been prepared for those fortuitous moments, and he has molded for himself a career that reflects the many facets of the profession. ○